

# Early Klamath News Started As 1923 Tabloid

(Editor's Note: The following story was copied from the "Historical Review of Journalism in the Klamath Country," a special supplement to the Herald and News edition of January 30, 1937. The story, along with all the others in the 10 page supplement, was written by Joe Pigney, then city editor of the Herald and News and now with the Associated Press in San Francisco. More of these stories will be carried at a future date.)

The Klamath News, the youngest of Klamath county's two daily newspapers, has always been like Topsy, who "just grew."

Despite the ill omens attending the date, the Klamath News said good morning to the world on a chilly November 13 in 1923. The paper, dedicated to the rural rather than the city population of Klamath county, is now as much an institution in this section of Oregon as the veteran Evening Herald.

Headed by Nate Otterbein, well-loved dean of the Klamath newspaper and printing industry, the young News cried lustily for attention thirteen years ago and won it.

Think back to the Klamath Falls of 1923, with a population of less than 6000 inhabitants, this largest city in southern Oregon was striding through an era of expansion, of progress and of prosperity. In short, the Klamath Falls boom had arrived, and there was room for another newspaper.

Modest at the start, the News greeted the world but twice each week.

"To serve. To give all sides a hearing. To cater to no organization or clique. To be independent."

That was the policy ideal in the mind of Nate Otterbein and his two associates, Walter Stronach and F. C. Nickle. To this day the spirit of those three founders has been preserved in the columns of the Klamath News. Although ever conservative in appearance, the News has never hesitated to speak out in its devotion to the best interests of Klamath county and Oregon.

The idea of a second newspaper in Klamath Falls originated seven weeks before the first publication date of the News. Then there was a rush to assemble a modern printing plant on short notice.

The paper began its life in the little white, California-front building on South Fifth street — the frame structure still stands there across the street from the Odd Fellows building where the Klamath News and Evening Herald joined hands some years later under a single management. The tiny shack where the News was pioneered is now an office of the state highway commission.

Nate Otterbein, who has been associated with more than one successful newspaper enterprise in Klamath Falls and who still is in the harness as a linotype operator, owned a Model 14 Mergenthaler linotype. That machine formed the mechanical basis for the Klamath News. To it was added a Ludlow typograph for display faces. The machine, which was in operation until recently in the backshop of the Herald-News, was the only one in Oregon east of the Cascade mountains. It guaranteed readers of the News brand new, sharp, and clear type every day of publication. The news was printed on a Babcock press capable of turning out 2600 copies an hour.

The paper had a first-day circulation of 500 paid subscribers. That was the start and low point in its career, for today the same paper enjoys a circulation of many times that number.

Those first editions of the Klamath News reflected an idea gaining wide attention in American journalism. It was the tabloid or five-column width. The off-standard size had made a splurge in the east where it is still used by some of the country's largest papers. Back in the early 1920's, Cornelius Vanderbilt, a member of the socially and financially prominent eastern family, developed ambition along newspaper lines. He hooked his ladder to a far-off star, looked uncertainly into the future and saw himself as another William Randolph Hearst. Vanderbilt founded the old Illustrated News at Los Angeles and the Herald at San Francisco. Both were tabloids. The thought was that the advertiser could get better display, the news



UP THESE STEPS in the Odd Fellows building went the reporters for the Herald and News in the days when the paper was located there. The steps are a familiar sight to all now leading down to the basement under Dick Reeder's store on the corner of Fifth and Main. The News first moved into the building in 1925. It was then in the hands of Nate Otterbein, Byron Hurd and Walter Stronach. In 1927 the News was purchased by Bruce Dennis, who also purchased the Herald. The two papers were combined in the basement quarters that year and stayed there until late 1936 when they were moved to their present location.

could be presented more attractively and the reader would find more convenience in handling the smaller page. Vanderbilt and his high-priced executives, however, had a short life in journalism and the tabloid vanished with them as a major feature of Pacific coast journalism.

The exclusive night lease of the big United Press organization extending north, south, east and west to all corners of the globe still serves the News.

The News reflected the spirit of its community. In the bustling days of the middle 1920's, the paper occasionally found it necessary to wade into the thick of things and demand a periodical campaign against all manner of vice.

The paper was faithful in recording the milestones of Klamath Falls. It told of those boom days when the city was building at the rate of many thousands of dollars worth of permits each day. Of the carloads of lumber and produce rolling out every day to the major markets. Of Crater Lake, which on August 21, 1924, had the then fabulous total of 49,000 visitors for the season. Nothing was too small nor too difficult for the News to collect, edit and publish if it was for the good of the region or if it was an honest reflection of the life of

the times. Feeling pretty strong on its feet, the News issued the first special edition of its career on November 5, 1924, to inform its readers of the landslide victory scored by Calvin Coolidge and his running mate, Charles Dawes, at the general presidential elections.

As though forerunner of greater things to come, the News did a sudden about face on its tabloid policy when the carrier boys started on their routes the dawn of November 11, 1924. The paper jumped to a seven-column, full-page size with the front page announcement that "Yes, this is the Klamath News!"

On November 13, 1924, just one year after the first publication, this momentous announcements was made:

"The News is now a daily. A people's morning daily for Klamath Falls and Klamath county."

During these days of progress, there was considerable shifting in personnel. Otterbein and Stronach still remained as principal stockholders. The incorporation records of November 10, 1924, listed the names of John W. Shuler, W. A. Johnson and W. C. McCulloch as directors. Five days later they resigned. At this time Byron H. Hurd became an important stockholder. Nickle, the original city editor.

In making the public announcement of incorporation on November 18, L. W. Rood, "formerly editor of a local evening paper," was listed in the masthead as editor, and B. H. Stevenson, "an experienced San Francisco man," as business manager.

As a daily, the News was in direct competition with the Evening Herald. The fight for circulation had to be met and on Sunday, November 23, the News issued its first colored comic supplement. Early readers of the paper will recall the amusing antics of Slum Jim and the Force, Terry and Tack, Doings of the Van Loons and the Kelly Kids.

The step brought results. A week later the publishers announced a paid circulation of 1501 which represented a gain of 450 subscribers within the week.

On December 2, the News had its biggest publishing day, sending out 3000 issues. Many of the papers were complimentary issues as inducements to prospective subscribers.

Since entering the daily field, the News had limited itself to four and six pages as a sort of trial balloon. But at the start of the year a \$10,000 linotype was added to the equipment and the paper established a minimum of eight pages each day. The service in place of the bulletin briefs.

The little white building was no longer capable of housing the rapidly growing daily. Shortly after the turn of 1925 the editorial rooms were moved to 105 Melhase building with the plant and business office continuing at the original location. A week later the editorial rooms were moved back to 119 South Fifth street while the plant was transferred to the basement of the Odd Fellows building. It was inconvenient to have the various departments separated and soon the entire establishment was moved across the street.

Editor Rood resigned on February 1, 1925, to follow other work in San Francisco, leaving Otterbein, Stronach and Stevenson at the helm with Hurd as vice president but not taking an active part in the daily routine.

By this time the paper was fully established and boasted a paid circulation of 2800.

In May of 1925 J. W. McDonald, now a prominent San Francisco sports writer and president of the San Francisco Press club, became editor with Walter West as business manager. McDonald left the employ of the News in October of the same year and West departed in December.

Stevenson gave up his interests in the News in 1926 to become director of a tourist bureau at the junction of the Pacific and Green Springs highways. Edwin Rose served for a time as managing editor and James Buchanan as business manager.

The first change from the original ownership of the Klamath News was announced on April 21, 1927, when Otterbein, Hurd and Stronach sold their interests to Bruce Dennis of the Inland Publishing company. At the same time

Dennis purchased the Evening Herald from Murray and consolidated the two papers in a single plant in the basement of the Odd Fellows building.

Both papers were to be kept on a competitive basis and it was the hope of the new owner to preserve the identity of each.

Otterbein stayed on with the News for some time as city editor and Stronach was employed in the mechanical department. Lynn Zimmerman will be remembered as the business manager.

Some of the paper's original conservatism was lost under the Dennis ownership. That the boom days were somewhat tempered can be seen in the Dennis slogan of "Throw away your hammer—get out your horn."

In 1928 Otterbein resigned as city editor and was succeeded by Burt Holloway who later went into the newspaper business at Boston, Mass.

Howard Winnard, an outstanding journalism student at the University of Oregon and a promising fiction writer, worked as city editor until his death on August 11, 1928. The young man was accidentally killed on a forest road about 60 miles north of Klamath Falls while he was driving to the Pelican Bay camp to gather material for the Lumberlog, a weekly Klamath News feature.

Robert Galloway is also well-remembered in Klamath Falls as city editor of the News under Bruce Dennis.

Bruce Dennis continued as publisher until June of five years ago when the properties of both the Evening Herald and the Klamath News were purchased by interests headed by Frank Jenkins, the present editor and publisher.

When the Klamath News became a daily paper on November 13, 1924, it wrote with pride: "We have reasons to be proud of the accomplishment, for it is truly a decision of the people."

## Cover Picture

The cover of this Herald and News Fifty Years of Progress Tabloid was taken by staff photographer Don Kettler on the Westside Highway after one of the first snows last fall.

## FOURTEEN KILLED

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